

Farmers Market Advisory Committee (FMAC) Meeting Minutes September 21, 2020 - 5:30pm via Zoom/Facebook Live

FMAC Members in Attendance: Cortland Carrington, Lynn Schwartzberg, Mara Lea Rosenbarger, Suzanne Mann, Janice Lilly, Melanie McQuinn

FMAC Members not in Attendance: Rebecca Vadas, Whitney Schlegel, Michael Gleeson

Parks Department Staff in Attendance: Leslie Brinson

Call to Order

FMAC meeting was called to order by Cortland Carrington.

Approval of August Minutes

All members were given August minutes prior to the meeting. There were no changes to the minutes of the August meeting by FMAC members. Cortland made a motion to approve the minutes as they were updated by Melanie McQuinn prior to the meeting. Melanie McQuinn seconded the motion, all members present voted yes.

New Business

Leslie Brinson opened up with a timeline of what the FMAC can expect over the next few months. Tonight we will be discussing the price schedule that will go to the Park Board for review in October and then approved in November. Changes to the price schedule can happen at any point in the year, but all changes must go through the Park Board.

There have also been questions by vendors and the FMAC about the timeline of Market 2021. The Parks Department will evaluate the market as a staff as we do with all of our programs. We will begin the review at the end of October with a review of finances and discussions with FMAC members and staff. We hope to have a recommendation to the Park Board by the end of the year, hopefully November, but that will depend on the timeline. Ultimately the decision will be made by the Park Board. The department wants to gather as much information as possible from vendors, FMAC, customers and all those involved in the market. Leslie encouraged the council to be thinking about changes they would like to see in 2021. The market needs to continue to work on topics such as diversity, safety and inclusion, but also looking at other possible changes. With new "leadership" in 2021 and with all that 2020 has brought to us, is there is something else you would like to see in the market 2021. What does entertainment look like, producer only, do we add art vendors, how do the FBA fit in, all things are on the table and now is the time to be thinking about those possible changes.

The Price Schedule is approved on an annual basis and dictates pricing for all programs in the Department. Prices are evaluated yearly based on trends, finances, or community options. Beginning in 2019 and into 2020 the staff had been looking at the finances of the market and its 100% cost recovery levels. We

did not meet that 100% level in 2019 and we won't again in 2020. We need to begin looking at how we can get back to the 100% and are looking to do that over a 5 year plan. This conversation will begin looking at the revenue streams of the market and not at the expense side of the market. There are things that can be discussed and looked at on the expense side from staffing to supplies, but this meeting is about revenue. In 2020 we decreased the FBA fee from 10% to 7.5 % and many would like to see it decrease further. There was a push at that time to look at a more balanced revenue stream between farm vendors and FBA. The city has not increased farm vendor fees since 2012, so here nine years later the City believes it is time for an increase in farm vendor fees. That is up for discussion, and no vendor wants to see an increase, but from a financial standpoint a necessary decision. The amount of this increase could be up for discussion, but the City would be looking at a \$2.00 increase across the board for farm vendors.

Leslie showed the financial documents that were discussed in the January 2020 Park Board Meetings. These documents showed the anticipated revenue and expenses for 2020 and projected a cost recovery level of 75%, but we will not reach that level in 2020. Leslie outlined the expenses and revenue that are in the document. Financials from both 2018 and 2019 were also shown to the FMAC. Leslie will share the document with the FMAC after the meeting and is available in the January 2020 Park Board information.

Leslie told the FMAC about the current farm vendor pricing:

- Large Space= 18 per day
- Large Space/ Sr. or youth = 12 per day
- Small Space= \$10 per day
- Small Space/ Sr. or youth = \$7.00 per day
- Option to pay for ½ of year or full year fee.

Leslie outlined next steps. The FMAC can chose to vote, or not, on a recommendation to give to staff with a pricing increase.

Melanie asked what the estimated cost recovery will be in 2020, Leslie estimated that we would be lucky to hit the 50% level. Current revenue is about \$40,000 and the expenses are over \$120,000.

Lynn asked why the Market position went full time in 2020 from 50%. The change occurred due to the 2019 year and believing that there needed to be more time devoted to the market. That was the only position in the department at that level as well, so for consistency as well. After 2019, there were many things that the market needed to do to move forward and those things take time. Steps forward in diversity, inclusion, rebranding, bringing back the market attendance, marketing, programming, and those things take time behind the scenes.

Mara asked about the 100% cost recovery level and what other programs in the department are 100% cost recovery. The Park Board sets the cost recovery level of all programs and there are other programs with that cost recovery level, such as sports programs, golf course, etc. Mara believes there is great benefit to the community from the market and has concern about the market having to make that kind of revenue.

Suzanne Mann asked about the FBA fee for 2021. Leslie explained that as of right now a decrease in FBA fees is not being discussed. They had their fees reduced to 7.5% in 2020 and due to Covid they have not paid that fee this year.

Lynn asked if the A Fair of the Arts would be affected by this price structure. Leslie explained that the A Fair of the Arts program is funded separately from the market and this pricing discussion would not affect those prices.

Mara commented on the sponsorship concept and wondered if the Chamber of Commerce or downtown businesses would be an option for supporting the market. Downtown businesses do benefit from market attendance, so maybe that is an avenue that could bring a benefit to business.

Suzanne talked about the momentum being lost at the market. Leslie agreed and mentioned not knowing what 2021 looks like from a number of vendors and if the Winter Market continues and it will be a challenge over the next few months to answers some of those questions. Suzanne mentioned that she believes the Winter Market is committed to staying in this game.

Leslie mentioned that the department has done some research on other markets fees and the \$20 keeps up right in the same ballpark as those other markets. Melanie mentioned that she has been at markets where she paid \$25 for a space and they would not be opposed to that fee increase. Cortland also mentioned that he would support the fee increase based on the kind of space and coverings provided. Cortland mentioned perhaps a percentage increase instead of a flat fee increase and could that disproportioned percentage turn vendors that are on a budget away.

Cortland asked about how many part time staff are currently being used as opposed to what was being used. In 2019 we would normally have three part time staff working with two outside and one inside doing SNAP. In 2020, we are currently using 5 part time staff to accommodate the entrance and exit and counting needs. The city continues to increase its minimum wage and staff are currently getting paid \$13.41 per hour.

Melanie mentioned that due to Covid and other concerns the expectations of both the vendors and customers has increased and we have to figure out how to compensate for those. The Market manager ½ time may not have been yielding the results we were anticipating and it is coming down to dollars vs effort and that something has to give economically.

Cortland called for any member of the public who would like to comment on the price schedule they are welcome to do that at this time.

Randy Paul- in private business for years and when you are facing a situation as you are now and when you start looking at increasing fees or start looking internally, you would start looking at staff and other expenses.

Susan Welsand- I hear Covid blamed for loss of revenue with no mention of the BIG statement that drove off even more vendors, including the majority of the PFV. What is being done about the racial problems at the market?

Leslie acknowledged that the market has had some issues in the past and we are not shying away from those issues.

Cortland - thank you for your efforts for putting together those numbers and it gives us a lot to think about over the next few days and weeks. Do some of the budget numbers include law enforcement expenses? The budget numbers do not include law enforcement as those are not paid out of the Market Budget.

Cortland asked how the Farm Tours worked. Leslie explained how they have worked in the past and acknowledged they have not been a significant source of revenue.

Mara thinks there are a lot of non-monetary benefits that come out of the market, like the farm tours that are related to the mission of the market if it could be done. As far as connecting people to the local food and perhaps due even more shopping at the market.

Randy Paul- It's not unusual for any organization facing problems like those facing FM whether it makes sense to stay in business. The Market is dividing the community, so perhaps the answer is to close down and let a private co-op fill the need in the community. Does it make sense for the city to stay in the market business?

Cortland- on a side bar item- spent many years as a volunteer fire fighter and wondered if the farmers would donate produce for an auction dinner to raise money in that sense. More from a community outsource situation. Leslie said she did not know of that ever happening, but again all things are on the table.

Janice- thinks there are any number of things that could be looked at, in the past we did Ready, Set Grow and be involved in the education of growing food. A one day event, but an opportunity to do an ongoing event. Food justice opportunity to partner with Community Kitchen or Mother Hubbard and looking at the local food system and food justice. Leslie acknowledged these possibilities, but also acknowledged the time demanded of staff to do these.

Cortland called for any other comments, no other comments.

Any public comment for things not related to an agenda item.

Leslie explained how the agenda is created and that the FMAC will have the opportunity to let Cortland know of any agenda items and then Cortland and Leslie work together to create the agenda.

Market hours change to 9:00 am starting in October and we are currently taking applications for the November and Holiday Market. There are two more Tuesday markets and then that market will be complete for the year.

Cortland- do we do a cost recovery for the Tuesday Market? Leslie- we do not do one specific for that market as it is lumped into the bigger picture. We averaged 9 vendors and anywhere from 75-115 customers per day. We do still believe it has a lot of potential in that location and hope to continue to grow that Market.

Cortland made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Lynn second the motion. No one was opposed, so carried by consensus.